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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the impact of increasing immigration on English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) course offerings, presents the results of the 1998 National Curriculum Study, and examines existing ESL curriculum course designs through an analysis of selected course catalogs. The 1998 National Curriculum Study revealed that ESL programs are a significant component to most community college curricula. Out of a sample of 164 community colleges, 90 institutions offered ESL courses, a 15% increase from a 1991 study. Institutional size plays a role in ESL course availability, with the majority of course offerings located in community colleges with an enrollment of more than 6,000. Community colleges serve two types of ESL students: one who studies English for immediate job marketability, and another who views English acquisition as a step toward eventual transfer to a four-year institution. The 1998 study showed that transferability of ESL courses is affected by students' objectives, as well as by curriculum policy. Other needs that ESL programs can meet include teaching American social and civic traditions, and easing the acculturation process. Contains 17 references. (AS)

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Running Head: ESL in Community Colleges

**Analysis of ESL Course Offerings
in Community Colleges**

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Introduction

The importance of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs cannot be overlooked for the estimated 32 million people in the United States whose native language is not English (Ignash, 1994). This group includes refugees, migrants, immigrants, permanent residents, foreign students, and citizens. They constitute an increasingly sizeable and important segment of our population. However, some of these individuals are limited English proficient (LEP) and quickly discover restricted opportunities due to their poor English skills. Many of them attempt to develop English proficiency through ESL programs at community colleges. As social mobility is often tied to occupational status, income, and thus, educational attainment, non-native speakers of English need to master their new language in order to develop the necessary skills to survive in American society (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Ignash, 1995). However, an investigation of the existing ESL programs at the community college level is needed before its effectiveness can be determined.

The community college has been pushed into the forefront of this conversation. This system developed by reaching out to those not being served by the traditional routes of higher education (Cohen and Brawer, 1996). Therefore, the community college is designed to be flexible and serve a multiplicity of needs, from academic transfer preparation to adult education. For those who need it, ESL programs also strive to serve a range of needs, from developing basic conversation English skills to advancing baccalaureate degree

aspirations. As four-year institutions continue to push the role of English proficiency onto the community colleges, these two-year institutions are finding themselves tied closely to their initial mission and vision, "that the junior college should be a community college meeting community need" (Hollinshead, 1936, p.111). For an increasing number of students, their initial exposure to American higher education is through the community college system. Many of the students realize that improving their English will provide the entree needed to better employment opportunities (President's Initiative on Race, 1998, p. 105). Because language is viewed as the largest barrier to LEP students' academic and vocational success, the consistent and increasing demands for ESL courses indicate community colleges will continue to provide curriculum and services promoting ESL development.

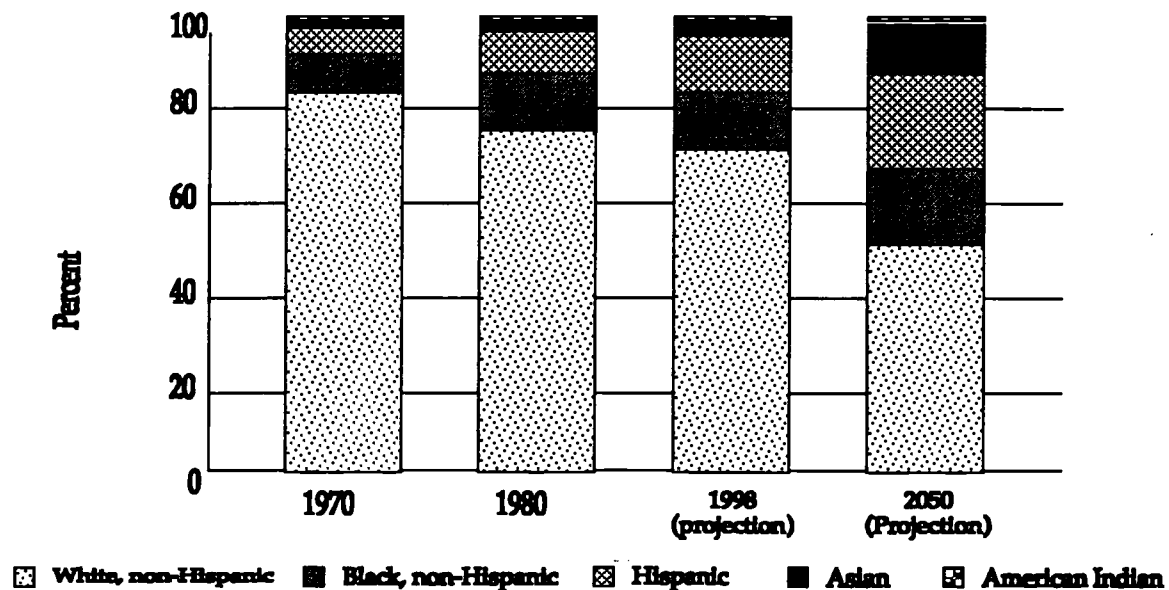
Therefore, to better understand dynamics of the current ESL curriculum available at community colleges, this paper will: a) briefly discuss the impact of immigration on ESL course offerings; (b) present the results of the 1998 National Curriculum Study; and (c) examine existing ESL curriculum course designs through an analysis of selected course catalogs.

Immigration and ESL

Immigration rates directly affect the demand for ESL courses. Current patterns suggest that immigrants from non-English speaking countries will continue at a steady rate (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1997). As almost three-fourths of the current immigrants arriving in the United States are of Hispanic ^{and} Asian

descent, these two communities will dramatically increase in size (see Figure 1). When the bulk of foreign speakers arrive in this country, they need assistance in English in order to take advantage of various educational and employment opportunities. Whether in the classroom or in the work place, specialized English skills are necessary (Buchanan, 1990; Misick and Santa Rita, 1996). Therefore, increased immigration will increase existing demands for ESL courses.

Figure 1.
Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Population.



Source: Bureau of the Census; President's Initiative on Race (1998).

Community colleges are and will continue to be directly affected by this demand. As indicated, the necessity of English proficiency combined with the increasing immigration from non-English speaking populations, increases ESL enrollment (President's Initiative on Race, 1998, p. 105). In fact, the demand for ESL courses has begun to exceed the supply (Fitzgerald, 1995). For example, in

the 1991 National Curriculum Study, Ignash (1994) examined eight community colleges that already had ESL student enrollments over 1,000 and noted that all these institutions anticipated an increase in ESL course demand over the next ten years. As a result, there may be increasing concern that these programs divert resources from other students and arguments may be made that community colleges need to define the boundaries of the ESL curriculum in order to best serve student needs.

Community colleges enroll two types of LEP students; one who studies English for immediate job marketability, the other who views English acquisition as a step towards eventual transfer to a four-year institution (Buchanan, 1990; Misick and Santa Rita, 1996; Gray et. al., 1996). The needs of these students also diverge. To satisfy their needs, ESL programs need to provide both functional and academic English language courses. Consequently, it is important for community colleges to determine how effectively they are servicing and supporting the varying needs of their LEP students.

Results of the 1998 National Curriculum Study

The first Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC) curriculum study began in 1975 to investigate the liberal arts offerings in the community college system. Subsequent studies analyzed all for-credit course offerings in the curriculum (for further description see Cohen and Ignash, 1994). ESL course offerings were coded as a sub-category under the larger subject area of foreign languages because these students are essentially learning a second language. For comparison purposes, each follow-up study placed ESL under the same coding

category. This most recent study determined the availability of ESL classes through a coding process, which involved an examination of the spring 1998 course offerings of 164 community colleges. These for-credit ESL courses were tallied and totaled for further analysis. This process did not account for canceled sections and other instances where the lack of demand prevented course availability.

The 1998 study revealed that ESL programs are a significant component to most community college curriculum. Out of the sample of 164 community colleges, 90 institutions offered ESL courses. This is about 15% increase from the 1991 study (Ignash, 1994). Since 1975, the percentage of ESL course offerings has steadily increased with each subsequent survey such that in 1998 more than half the community colleges sampled offered at least one class. This is the largest increase since the inception of the National Curriculum Study (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Percentage of Community Colleges Offering ESL Courses In the Spring Term.

1975 (n=156)	1977 (n=178)	1983 (n=173)	1986 (n=95)	1991 (n=164)	1998 (n=164)
26%	33%	27%	38%	40%	55%

Location of ESL Courses

Where are these courses located? It appears that institutional size played a role in ESL course availability. The majority of ESL course offerings (31.7%) are located in larger community colleges, where the total enrollment is more than 6000. Of the 90 institutions that offer ESL, the survey reveals that roughly 23% had more than 20 classes available. Not surprisingly, over half of the larger community colleges offered more than 20 courses (see Table 2). For example, out

of the 26 California community colleges in the sample, 22 of them have large enrollment numbers. Not surprisingly, as a state, it has the most extensive ESL curricula, with ten institutions offering more than 40 classes.

Table 2.
Community Colleges Offering More than Twenty ESL Courses in Spring 1998 by Size.

	Small (enrollment \leq 2748)	Medium (2749 \leq enrollment \leq 6141)	Large (n \geq 6142)
Over 20 ESL course offerings	(n=2) 15%	(n=5) 20%	(n=30) 51%

The diversity of the geographic region can also be a factor. Immigration patterns reveal migration toward large metropolitan cities, mainly due to the availability of employment opportunities (Levine, 1995). Based on these patterns, the Western, Midwestern and Middle Atlantic States account for 71% of the ESL curriculum. These areas include major metropolitan cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, which are located in states (e.g. CA, NJ, IL, NY) that have higher percentages of non-native English speaking immigrants (Ignash, 1994; Ong and Hee, 1993). The 11 institutions that only offer one ESL class are primarily located in the Midwest. This indicates that outside of the Chicagoland area, there may be less demographic diversity, which results in a decreased ESL course need and demand. Table 3 breaks down the ESL offerings by the six geographic regions.

Table 3.
Geographic Distribution of Community College ESL Course Offerings in Spring 1998. (n=90)

West	Southwest	Midwest	South	Middle Atlantic	Northeast
32%	13%	19%	8%	20%	7%

Due to rounding, total percentage may not equal 100%.

The strength of the regional community college systems may also affect course offerings (Cohen, 1999, class presentation). Except in the South, at least 40% of the institutions sampled in each region offered at least one ESL course. Only 21% of the Southern community colleges had ESL classes available. These courses were located in Florida, where the community college system is more structured and established.

The impact of geographic diversity on ESL course availability can also be examined on an institutional level. Table 4 reveals the ten community colleges reporting the largest ESL programs and calculates what percentage of the curriculum it occupies. This provides additional insight into specific institutions that serve high portions of non-native English speakers. Again, immigration patterns account for the presence of five California community colleges, which represent half of the top ten institutions. El Paso Community College, with a high Spanish-speaking population, represents the most number of ESL courses available at one institution.

Table 4.
1998 Curriculum Participants Reporting Large ESL Programs.

Community College	Number of ESL Courses	As Percent of Total Courses
El Paso Community College (TX)	224	9%
Imperial Valley Community College (CA)	134	15%
Passaic County Community College (NJ)	134	19%
American River Community College (CA)	99	4%
Sacramento City College (CA)	94	5%
Bergen Community College (NJ)	77	5%
CUNY Bronx Community College (NY)	71	5%
San Diego City College (CA)	64	6%
Mission College (CA)	62	5%
Delgado Community College (LA)	61	7%

Community colleges with expanded ESL programs reveal that ESL courses make up a small percentage of the total course offerings. With the exceptions of Imperial Valley Community College (CA) and Passaic County Community College (NJ), most large ESL programs contributed to less than 10% of all available courses. Again, larger institutions have more flexibility to offer expanded programs in many subjects. Therefore, the prevalence of ESL courses does not have take up a significant portion of the overall curriculum.

ESL and Foreign Language Course Offerings

Is ESL course availability affected by other foreign language programs? The 1998 National Curriculum Study reveals that foreign language courses are still widely available despite the system-wide increase in ESL classes (see Table 5). In fact, foreign language and ESL courses were available at all but six institutions. Out of 5824 foreign language courses offered, over 2600 were for general language courses, especially Spanish and French. On the other hand, there were 370 fewer sections available for ESL instruction. Therefore, increased enrollment and demand for ESL courses have not negatively impacted the access to other foreign language courses.

Table 5.
Percentage of Types of Foreign Language Courses Available During Spring 1998.
(n=5824)

General Foreign Language Courses	ESL Courses	Career-Related Courses	*Other Language Courses
46%	40%	1%	12%

Due to rounding, total percentage may not equal 100%.

*These were primarily sign language courses.

While availability of ESL courses decreased from the 1991 National Curriculum Study, many students have increased access to these courses. Although the previous study indicated that ESL accounted for 51% of all language courses (Ignash, 1994), the 1998 data reveals that more institutions are offering ESL classes.

Community colleges who place particular emphasis on ESL programs can impact the availability of general foreign language courses. At these institutions, ESL courses contribute at least half of the classes offered under the more general category of foreign language (see Table 6). Although there are fewer general foreign language courses offered at institutions with large ESL programs, many students are working towards mastering a foreign language, in this case, English.

Table 6.
ESL Percentage of Total Foreign Language Courses for 1998 Participants with Large ESL Programs.

Community College	Number of ESL Courses	As Percent of Total Foreign Language Courses
El Paso Community College (TX)	224	85%
Imperial Valley Community College (CA)	134	85%
Passaic County Community College (NJ)	134	90%
American River Community College (CA)	99	44%
Sacramento City College (CA)	94	58%
Bergen Community College (NJ)	77	49%
CUNY Bronx Community College (NY)	71	59%
San Diego City College (CA)	64	59%
Mission College (CA)	62	54%
Delgado Community College (LA)	61	68%

Types of ESL Courses

Are these courses transferable? The transferability of ESL courses can be affected by the objectives of its students. Although the transfer function is the primary mission of the community college (Cohen and Brawer, 1996), the

curriculum accounts for their purpose in enrolling in ESL classes. There are two types of ESL students; one who studies English for immediate job marketability, the other views English as a step towards eventual transfer to a four-year institution (Buchanan, 1990; Misick and Santa Rita, 1996; Gray et. al., 1996). Given the diverging interests, this may explain why 27% of community colleges offer a combination of course type which includes transferable, nontransferable, remedial, and distance classes. Not surprisingly, institutions that offer this flexibility and choice to its students tend to be larger community colleges, because they usually offer more of everything.

Curriculum policy may account for variations in ESL course types among various community colleges. Unlike other states, California tends to offer a mix of transferable and nontransferable ESL courses (see Table 7). This could be attributed to California's public higher education system offering and accepting ESL courses at all its levels. For example, at American River College (CA), Composition and Reading, a course geared toward ESL students, is accepted at both the California State University and University of California systems (American River College Catalog, 1997-8, p. 107). This may be different in other states, where the public university system is less intricate and the emphasis may be on college-level work. Additionally, this may also be due to each state's unique funding policies in regards to ESL education.

Table 7.
ESL Course Type Based on 1998 Participants with Large Programs. (n=51)

State	Transfer and Nontransfer offered	Only nontransfer offered	Remedial and/or Distance offered
California	14	11	6

New York	0	8	1
New Jersey	0	4	1
Texas	1	4	1

Availability of distance courses suggests that technology is a developing tool in teaching English proficiency. Distance courses in ESL are located mainly in California community colleges with large enrollment counts (five out of the six in the sample). A glimpse at the catalog descriptions indicates that although more of these courses were aimed at introducing American culture, basic skills classes were also offered. For example, at Mission College (CA), the distance courses are titled American Culture and Language 1 and American Culture and Language 2. Combined together, they serve as a year-long course "designed to help the student develop basic strategies for community in the English language" (Mission College Catalog, 1998, p. 114). One of Bakersfield Community College's (CA) ESL distance classes emphasizes tools for college survival, which include study and personal life skills; however, the other, a course titled "Basic Grammar and Syntax 1," focuses on the mechanics of writing (Bakersfield Community College Catalog, 1996-8, p.146).

Students interested in the transfer option, discovering that most ESL courses cannot be counted toward general education requirements, can experience decreased levels of persistence and motivation (Gray et. al., 1996). In general, a majority of the ESL courses were nontransfer ones as three-fourths of the colleges have solely a nontransfer ESL curriculum. Therefore, most ESL instruction offered few credits toward graduation and does not fulfill any degree

requirements (Gray et. al., 1996). ESL instructors point out that their students are really mastering a second language, and that many of these students are academically prepared for the college credit courses, but their lack of English proficiency prevents classroom understanding and success (Gray et. al., 1996). Therefore, students who bypass ESL coursework, even though they do not have complete English mastery, often suffer and fail the college-level courses and become disheartened.

Although ESL is primarily intended to prepare student for college level course work in English, it also can serve other needs. For example, ESL programs can include classes focused on American social and civic traditions. Cerritos College (CA) offers a course titled "American Expressions and Culture" in which "students study American expressions and American social customs...Social customs, such as those regarding time, dress, guest behavior, gestures, and selected public encounters, are discussed" (Cerritos College Catalog, 1997-8, p. 178). ESL courses can also help with the acculturation process by revealing to its students the expectations regarding class participation, homework, and grading. Additionally, ESL programs can operate in tandem with counseling and support services to help immigrants with their academic and cultural transition.

ESL Curriculum Design

Although the 1998 National Curriculum Study provides an overview on the availability and distribution of ESL courses across the community college

system, an examination of 12 course catalogs with the most ESL course offerings reveals there is little standardization in regards to the pedagogical approach taken by the community colleges. Only for-credit courses are considered in this discussion but it must be noted that, at many institutions, ESL classes were available for non-credit. An example of this can be seen at Mission College (CA), where basic ESL skills development courses are also offered for no credit and, therefore, cannot be applied toward an associate degree. Non-credit curriculum, usually offered off-campus (e.g. adult education), can be segregating and can set students off from the rest of its peers, thus lowering faculty expectations and student persistence rates (Ignash, 1995; Gray et. al., 1996).

The ESL curriculum at various community colleges did not always address the distinction between conversational English and academic English. Programs focusing primarily on language mechanics fail to recognize the different aspects involved in developing English proficiency (Song, 1995). For example, Bergen Community College's (NJ) courses were mainly grammar and writing related, "designed to improved fundamental academic skills in areas of reading and writing...[and]...introduce students to the basic grammar of the English simple sentence" (Bergen Community College Catalog, 1997-8, p. 137-8). Delgado Community College (LA), with courses titled "Developmental Composition and Developmental Reading" and "English Composition 1 and Analytical Reading," also emphasized language mechanics (Delgado Community College Catalog, 1997-8, p. 216). These institutions neglected the oral communication component of mastering the English language.

Some community colleges recognized the importance of being able to develop English skills beyond the academic classroom setting. Mission College (CA) emphasizes communication skills and the ability to apply these newly forming skills in various settings. Therefore, some course titles include: "Pronunciation and Listening", "Basic English as a Second Language in the Workplace", and "Academic Speaking." Mission seems to distinguish between the differences in spoken and written, conversational and academic, English. This allows students to connect the structure and mechanics of the language to their own usage of English (Comacho, 1995; Misick and Santa Rita, 1996).

As noted earlier, ESL courses can play an important role in helping non-native English speakers acclimate to their new environment. American River College (CA) addresses employment concerns by offering multiple sections of "Workplace Listening and Speaking," at the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. This series of classes "includes instruction in the effective listening techniques, communication and pronunciation skills needed for success in the workplace" (American River College Catalog, 1997-8, p. 109). Additionally, Passaic County Community College lists courses titled "ESL Reading in American Culture 1 and 2" which "develops awareness of American culture by reading and analyzing materials regarding American society" (Passaic County Community College Catalog, 1997-99, p. 87-88). The skills developed in these classes assist in the adjustment process because they are applicable in and outside of the classroom

Given the benefits of integrating the language mechanics, verbal skills, with an understanding of the cultural norms, some community colleges offer ESL

courses in all areas. El Paso Community College's (TX) large comprehensive ESL program allows students to create personalized curriculum and feel included in the college environment. The emphasis is on sustaining student interest and persistence, an integral component to mastering English (Ignash, 1995). Thus, English proficiency courses are included along with subject material from the more popular majors, lab activities are instituted to help with retention, and bilingual counselors and materials are available to assist students' needs. For example, the ESL section of the catalog was printed in both English and Spanish. However, most institutions seemed limited in the type of ESL courses they could offer and their program was not as expansive as El Paso Community College. In any case, connecting the cognitive skills to social survival skills will help students better navigate in and outside the classroom (Kimmel and Davis, 1996).

ESL programs that were more structured in format seemed to limit students' course selection. The format design of the ESL programs varied by institution. While all community colleges had an English assessment process, there were community colleges, like Pasadena City College (CA), that appeared to allow students to select their own sequence of ESL coursework, usually with counselor consultation. Others, like Passaic County Community College offered a more structured design. These courses were arranged in a specific format and students had to follow the course scheduling in order to graduate from the ESL program. Even the courses taken outside of the ESL department were determined for them. Thus, opportunities for additional intellectual stimulation are perhaps limited until students developed English proficiency.

The location of an ESL program can vary with each institution. In most cases, ESL courses are grouped in the course catalogs under a separate heading. In some cases, the ESL program is divided between departments. At Pasadena City College (CA), ESL classes are under the English, Foreign Language, and Communications departments. Imperial Valley College's (CA) ESL courses are subsumed under the English department, thus projecting more of a remedial approach. Perhaps the curricular emphasis impacts the location of the ESL program at a community college.

Community colleges attempt to serve the multiple needs of their ESL students by offering a variety of services to supplement the curriculum. Many institutions, like Passaic County Community College (NJ), offer students personal, academic, and employment counseling services. Others, like San Diego City College (CA), have established centers on campus that also offer tutoring and other opportunities to reinforce the English skills. William Rainey Harper College (IL) is unusual example of an institution striving to serve all the needs of its community members. Its ESL program has specific classes for the deaf and hard of hearing. Therefore, community colleges continue to responsive to ESL student needs.

Implications for Community Colleges

The increasing presence of ESL courses across the community college system can heighten the pressure to demonstrate its effectiveness across various student learning and outcome measures. Although there are some institutional attempts to move toward a student-centered approach to ESL (Misick and Santa

Rita, 1996), the main concern about the current ESL programs is that its full impact is unknown (Ignash, 1995). The transitory status of the students as well as varying individual objectives can complicate measurement efforts. It is not only difficult to track these students but to also determine the point of outcome assessment.

Conclusion

The CSCC's National Curriculum Study provides some insight on the curriculum and services available to ESL students as ESL programs continue to develop and expand. Even in the most conservative estimates, this nation will still see an increase in the immigration pattern, especially for those individuals from non-English speaking countries (Smith and Edmonston, 1997). In addition, more international students are choosing to study in the United States than anywhere else and increasing numbers of these students are arriving to attend our community colleges (Baldwin, 1991). This continuous influx of potential students will create additional pressure for ESL programs in quality and quantity. In fulfilling their mission to serve their community, community colleges will certainly respond to this increasing demand.

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